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ENG 3009G-012: Myth and Culture

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English 3009C-012 Myth and Culture

Fall semester 2000

Dr. Susan Bazargan

TTH 2-3:15 CH 303

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Office Hours: T: 11-12, W: 11-12. 1-3 and by appointment

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Course requirements:

I. Class attendance:

I have a strict attendance policy. If you have more than two unexcused absences during the semester, your grade for the semester will lose one-half point for each unexcused absence. If you are ill or have to leave campus because of a family emergency, please call my office or home and let me know.

II. Papers:

You will write two papers, the first 3-4 pages long (it can be longer); the second 5-6 pages long (typed, double-spaced). The first paper can be revised for a better grade.

III. Journals:

I want you to write 2 typed pages every week, summarizing the material you've read that week for the course. Please date the entries for each week. Include your thoughts and questions about and responses to the readings.

III. Exams and Quizzes:

The midterm exam will be held on 10/5; the date of the final will be announced later. Pop quizzes might be given occasionally. Exams and quizzes cannot be made up.

Grading Policy: 1st paper: 15%; 2nd paper: 20%; Journal: 15%; Midterm and Quizzes: 20%; Final: 20%; Class participation: 10%

Conferences:

Please stop by my office to discuss any problem or question related to the course. You can also make an appointment if my regular office hours are inconvenient for you.

Other policies:

1. The English Department's policy on plagiarism states that "Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism--the appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work" (Random House Dictionary of the English Language) has the right and responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office."

2. If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Required Texts:

Coomaraswamy, Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists
 Cortina, Hispanic American Literature
 Erdoes and Ortiz, American Indian Myths and Legends
 Harris and Platzner, Classical Mythology
 Kovacs, The Epic of Gilgamesh
 Rinpoche, The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying
 Rosenberg, World Mythology, 3rd ed.
 Scheub, The African Storyteller
 Trout, Native American Literature
 Willis, World Mythology
 Worley and Perry, African American Literature

Class Meetings:

I. Myth and Culture: Some Definitions

8/22: Introduction to the course. Definitions of Myth and Culture

8/24: Willis, pp. 10-16; Rosenberg, xi-xxi

II: Africa:

8/29: Willis, "Egypt" pp. 36-39; "Osiris, Isis, and Horus" in Rosenberg (pp. 12-21); "Telepinu" in Rosenberg

8/31: Willis, "Africa": pp. 264- 265; 274-277; Scheub: "Notes on Myth" (pp. 50-52); "The Creation"; "God Creates Man and Woman"; "Ikaggen creates an Eland"

9/5: All in Scheub: "Notes on the Trickster" (pp. 116-119); "Abunawas and the Goat's Horns"; "Beiho Tricks his Uncles" ; "The Magic Drum"

9/7: All in Scheub: "Notes on the Hero" (pp. 198-201); "Sikhuluma, The Boy Who Did Not Speak"; "Liongo"; "Notes on the Rites of Passage" (pp. 266-269); "The Girl with One Hand"

III: The Middle East

9/12: Willis, "The Middle East" pp. 56-57, 60-61; 62-63. Rosenberg, "The Enuma Elish" pp. 3-11; Kovacs, The Epic of Gilgamesh (Read the Introductory material) and Rosenberg, "The Epic of Gilgamesh" pp. 26-56

9/14: Rosenberg, "Gilgamesh" (continued)

IV: Greece and Rome

9/19: All pages are from Harris and Platzner: 3-46; 49-65

9/21: Harris and Platzner: "The Great Goddess and Goddesses" pp. 84-104

9/26: Rosenberg, "Demeter and Persephone" (93-99) and "The Iliad" pp. 106-155.

9/28: **First Essay is Due.** "The Iliad" (continued);

10/3: Rosenberg, "Medea" 204- 241.

10/5: Midterm exam

V: India

10/10: Willis: "India" pp. 68-69; 72-81; Rosenberg, "The Ramayana" pp. 296-321

10/12: Willis, "Myths of Buddhism" pp. 86-87; Coomaraswamy, Chapter V, Buddha 245-250, 259-276

10/17: Rinpoche, The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying (Chapters One, Two, Four)

10/19: Rinpoche (Chapters Five, Six, Seven, Eight)

VI: North America

10/24: Willis, pp. 220-233.

From Erdoes and Ortiz: Read the Introduction (xi-xv) and pp. 3-4. "How Men and Women Got Together" and "The White Buffalo Woman"

10/26: **Turn in Journals.** Erdoes and Ortiz: pp. 75-76; "The Good Twin and the Evil Twin"; "Old Man Coyote Makes the World" ; pp. 179-180; "Hiawatha the Unifier"; "The Life and Death of Sweet Medicine"

10/31: Rosenberg, "The Emergence"; "Lodge-Boy and Thrown-Away" "The Woman Who Fell From the Sky" "Raven and the Sources of Light"

VII: Myth and Culture in the Modern World

11/2: Trout, *Native American Literature*: pp. xvii-xxvii (Historical Overview); "Indians Today, the Real and the Unreal"; "I Am Not a Mascot"

11/7: Trout: "Adventures of an Indian Princess" "The Council of the Great Peace" "The Sun Dance" "All My Relations"

11/9: Trout: "Buried Alive" "'Introduction' from *The Way to Rainy Mountain*" "Lullaby"

11/14: Worley and Perry, *African-American Literature*: Historical Overview (xv-xxii); "Sonny's Blues"

11/16: Worley and Perry, "Nat Turner's Confession"; "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" "To Mississippi Youth"

Second Paper is Due

Thanksgiving Break

11/28: Worley and Perry, "Sweat" "1927, from *Sula*" "Thank you, M'am"

Turn in Journals

11/30: Cortina, *Hispanic American Literature*: Introduction (xiii-xix); "Our America" "The Prize of Freedom"; "The Moths"

12/5: "From *Bless Me Ultima*" "Tales Told Under a Mango Tree" "My Name"

12/7: "First Love" "Bitter Sugar: Why Puerto Ricans Leave Home" "Thoughts on a Sunday Afternoon"

Date of the final will be announced later.

English 3009C Myth and Culture

Dr. Susan Bazargan

Topics for Essay # 2 (5-6 pages long; it can be longer)

Due 11/16

1. During the last three weeks of the semester, we've studied selections of stories from Hispanic American, African-American, and Native American literature. Concentrate on one of these literatures and read 2-3 stories in one section of the anthology (for example, "Identity" in *African-American Literature*). Then find a way to connect the story (or stories) to some of the major themes we have been discussing in class regarding myth and culture. What you are trying to show is whether and in what manner these themes are still with us, as shown in more "modern" versions of storytelling. Are the themes questioned, challenged, rejected, embraced, disguised in modern clothing, or...?
2. Focus on a continent or culture we have not discussed in class. (This could be a culture of your own ancestry). Read one of the most celebrated myths from this culture and analyze its main themes to reveal some of the "fundamental truths" observed by this culture. These could relate to creation, life, death, kinship, love, heroism, social order, etc.
3. The "culture" you've been immersed in for the past few years has sprung from an institution, Eastern Illinois University, the center of your life as a college student. Write an essay in which you examine some of the outstanding rituals, symbols (language but also icons, buildings, etc.) and myths that make up this culture. To do a good job, you need to be a detached observer and perhaps critic. You can put a satiric spin on your discussion, but make sure the satire works!
4. Choose what you consider the most interesting female character you're read about in the myths we've studied. Analyze the character to reveal those dimensions you find to be exceptional and why. What do we surmise about the culture's views towards women as shown in your chosen myth?

If you have questions about the assignment, please stop by my office for a conference.

English 3009 Myth and Culture

Dr. Susan Bazargan

Topics for Essay # 1 (3-4 pages long; it can be longer)

Due 9/29

Choose one of the following topics:

1. The study of myth allows us to see human imagination in action in a variety of cultural contexts. Consider two creation myths. Focus on and compare/contrast a few selected images and symbols used in these two stories. What conclusions does your study yield in terms of differences and similarities in the ways in which human beings from different cultures organize and give shape to what is often beyond human comprehension?
2. We have been studying myths focusing on the hero. Choose a story we have not discussed in class and analyze the ways in which the concept of the hero or heroine and the idea of heroism are played out by the characters, the plot, the symbols, and so on. What does the story reveal about the culture's standards for heroic behavior?
3. The trickster is another figure we talked about. Using Scheub's notes on the trickster and the hero as a beginning point, write an essay in which you study the fine line separating the two figures as revealed in a specific myth. You can use a story we have discussed or choose your own.
4. Focus on what you consider to be the most interesting aspect of either the epic of *Gilgamesh* or the *Iliad*. In your essay carefully analyze and discuss this special dimension of the epic.